Coming to the Communion

Charles R. Erdman

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/comingtocommunio0000char_t5t9

Coming to The Communion

A Manual of Instruction for Preparatory Classes and Private Study

By
Charles R. Erdman

Professor of Practical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary.
Formerly Pastor of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, and of the First Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Pa.

Prepared under the direction of the Joint Committee on Religious Education

Philadelphia
Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work
1912

Copyright 1912
By the Trustees of the Presbyterian
Board of Publication and
Sabbath-School Work

Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Accepting Jesus Christ	13
II.	Confessing Jesus Christ	23
III.	The Church	35
IV.	The Sacraments	47
V.	Christian Life	59
VI.	Christian Service	69

Foreword

IT is hoped that this little book may be of help to many persons in connection with the observance of the Lord's Supper. Communicant members of the Church often desire, for this service, special preparation of mind and heart, and a brief review of the great truths which the season suggests. Baptized members, who in infancy were given to God by their parents, need to be reminded of the privilege and duty of taking their places at the table of the Lord, in public acknowledgment of their relation to him and to his Church; such should receive instruction and guidance for their first communion. Other attendants upon the church services, who are secretly trusting in Christ, or who are seeking light upon religious problems, will be aided by a definite statement as to the Church and its sacraments; and they may thus be led to a profession of faith, and to a fuller Christian life and service.

The special design of this manual, however, is for the use of pastors who may wish to

place in the hands of inquirers such information as it contains, or who may desire a handbook for the instruction of classes preparatory to the communion.

Six outline studies are here offered; they may be modified or enlarged as circumstances demand and personal preference dictates. These studies relate to Christian faith and profession, to the Church and its sacraments, and to Christian life and service. Quotations from Scripture, from the standards of the Church, and from the Revised Hymnal have been included, either to be memorized or to be used as illustrations of the topics treated. Brief collects or prayers, selected from various sources, have been added to the chapters; and also questions for review, the answers to which are indicated by references to the New Testament. The quotations of Scripture are usually from the Revised Version. The studies will probably be found to suggest most of the great truths which should be presented to those who are about to partake of "the supper of the Lord."

Preparatory Classes

The practice of conducting classes preparatory to the communion is being widely adopted. The plan is in no sense novel, it is merely a modern form of the instruction which the Church has given in all ages since the early centuries. Wherever the method is followed, the most satisfactory results are being secured; in fact the establishment of such classes has come to be regarded as a necessity of modern church life. The need is quite evident in a church which, like the Presbyterian, holds that "all children born within the pale of the visible Church are members of the Church, are to be baptized, are under the care of the Church," and "when they come to years of discretion . . . . ought to be informed that it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." However careful the training in many Christian homes, however excellent the instruction in modern Sunday schools, it must be admitted that preparatory classes are needed in exercising such pastoral care as is partly described by the recommendation that "pastors and sessions assemble, as often

The Need

as they may deem necessary during the year, the baptized children . . . . to explain to them the nature and obligations of their baptism, and the relation they sustain to the Church."

The Membership

These classes should not be limited, however, to baptized children, nor in fact to children. Such classes should be formed for adults, and at times even for adult church members. Some pastors bring together all the Sunday-school pupils of a certain age, who are then expected to attend in a body, together with their teachers, while the special instruction takes the place of the usual Sunday-school lessons. Even when, as is more common, membership is purely voluntary, the larger number of attendants will be from the Sunday school, and they will be young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen; but the wise pastor will enlarge the usefulness of his classes by providing for the attendance of all persons who desire special instruction relative to the communion. Invitation to the classes should be given in private as well as at the public services of the church, and in extending it the pastor should enlist the aid of parents and Sunday-school teachers. The

largest possible attendance should be encouraged, but it may be noted that the smallest classes are frequently the most profitable. Above all it should be definitely understood that in joining a class no person is thereby committed to "unite with the Church," to "come to the communion," or publicly "to profess faith in Christ."

The Time

The time for holding these classes will be determined by the character of the membership as well as by local conditions. It is usually advisable to hold six sessions, one each week, before one or two communions, every year. When Sunday-school classes attend in a body the instruction is given during the regular hour of the Sunday-school session. Usually some other day of the week is selected. Different hours may be appointed to meet the convenience of children and of adults. For example, before one communion six sessions of the class may be held on Friday or Saturday afternoons, to provide for the attendance of the younger people; and before another communion six sessions may be held in the evenings, to suit the convenience of older attendants.

The usual time of each session should be

about forty-five minutes; no session should occupy more than one hour.

The Place The best place for meeting is almost invariably some part of the church building. Occasionally added interest has been found by holding the meetings at the home of the pastor or of some member of the class; but the serious objection to this plan is that some persons may feel less free to join the class than they would in response to a general invitation to a meeting at the church. Too large a room is to be avoided; and the place most commonly selected is the lecture room, the Sunday-school room, or the pastor's study.

The Leader The leader of the class, except in rare cases, should be the pastor of the church. While in certain instances the work has been well done by others, no pastor should willingly forego this opportunity of rendering a supremely important service to those most in need of his guidance and influence. A considerable expense of time and strength must necessarily be demanded by the preparation and the teaching, yet the busiest pastor will feel fully repaid by the results achieved.

The method of conducting these prepara-

tory classes is left to the discretion of the leader, and will obviously vary in different cases. Each session should open with brief devotional services. The use of Bibles and notebooks should be encouraged.

The Method

Every member of the class should own a copy of this manual or some similar handbook. Among those with which pastors may wish to be acquainted are, the "Manual for Communicants' Classes," by J. R. Miller, D.D.; "Christian Doctrine," by Professor W. Brenton Greene, Jr., D.D.; "Being a Christian," by Washington Gladden, and "The Lord's Supper," by Rev. Robert Pogue.

The leader should present the topic briefly, but with illustrations, and with definite application, yet in an informal and conversational manner, accompanying his presentation by simple questions, and inviting other questions from members of the class. The topic for the next session should be assigned, and the meeting closed with prayer. An opportunity should be offered to arrange for private interviews with any members of the class who may desire to speak personally with the pastor. Memorizing of Scripture verses and hymns may be encouraged, but no task should

be burdensome or embarrassing, and no open declaration of faith or promise of confession should be requested; the whole aim of the instruction should be to enable those present more clearly to see their relation to Christ and his Church.

I

Accepting Jesus Christ

"As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name."

John 1:12.

"Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."

Shorter Catechism, 86.

Accepting Jesus Christ

No step in life can compare in importance with that of a free, glad, loving acceptance of Christ. Without him we have neither light, nor strength, nor hope; we do not know God in his real holiness and love; we find no relief from the guilt and power of sin; we have no assurance of future glory. Through Christ we know God as our loving Father; in him we have a Saviour from sin; with him we shall share the blessedness of our Father's house forever.

Christ Revealing the Father

Christ is the revelation of God. Not only does he teach us what God is like, in the purity and sympathy and tenderness of the divine Fatherhood; but he is God, one with the Father, and "in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form." So truly is he "God manifest in the flesh" that he could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; "I and the Father are one"; "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is just because he can reveal the Father to each one of us, that he is able to promise us peace and rest if we come to him. When he gave his matchless invitation: "Come unto

me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he first made this wonderful claim: "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." He who can make us know God in his blessed Fatherhood, he it is who can give us rest; and if we take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, we "shall find rest unto our souls." Whatever our doubts or fears or burdens or cares may be, he offers us his peace, and his loving companionship, and his divine power. The better we know him, the more we learn of him, the longer we follow him, the more real and perfect will this "rest" become.

Christ Redeeming from Sin

Christ is also our Saviour, and Redeemer from sin. Before his birth the angel was heard to say, "Thou shalt call his name 'Jesus' (Saviour); for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." So Paul declares in one of his letters: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

He redeemed us from the guilt of sin in his death for us on the cross: "He bore our

sins in his own body on the tree." "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." "He loved us and gave himself for us." When we do wrong our conscience is troubled and we find no relief from our distress by hiding or trying to forget our fault. Peace comes only when we "confess our sins," believing that he is able to "forgive and cleanse."

He redeems us from the power of sin by his Spirit, the "Comforter," the divine "Helper" who dwells within us, and subdues that which is evil and strengthens that which is good. We are continually tempted by evil, and we overcome its power not merely by fear of punishment, nor by the strength of our wills, but by depending upon the unseen Saviour "who is able to keep us from falling."

He redeems us from the presence and consequences of sin, as he brings us, at last, into the glory of his perfect kingdom from which has been cast out "everything that offends." Our struggle is not to be endless. Some day we are to see our Saviour, and "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Christ is also our divine Master and Lord. He declared, after he had risen from the dead, that all power had been given him in

heaven and on earth; and he sent out his followers to bring all men into obedience and submission to him as his disciples. His great apostle Paul called himself a "bond-servant" or "slave of Jesus Christ"; and he regarded himself as "crucified with Christ." This was what Christ was ever demanding. He insisted that men must "take up the cross" and "come after him." The cross was a symbol of death; and the Master meant that self must be put to death, and the will of each follower be wholly surrendered to the will of his sovereign Lord.

Christ Ruling as Lord

Since Christ is such a Revelation of the Father, such a loving Saviour, such a divine Lord, only he is properly called a Christian who stands in a right relation to Christ. This relation has already been suggested, and it may be made still more plain by mentioning some of the familiar phrases by which it is described in the New Testament. Men are bidden "to believe" on Christ, "to come" to him, "to love" him, "to follow" him, "to obey" him, "to trust" him, "to serve" him, "to receive" or "to accept" him. The last of these is no more

Becoming a Christian

important than the others, nor does it differ from them in meaning, but it may be emphasized as fixing our thought upon the beginning of a conscious Christian life. One becomes a Christian when he accepts Christ as his Teacher, his Redeemer, his divine Lord. Of course one may not remember the time when first he so regarded Christ. Then, too, the early knowledge of Christ is limited and vague. But as Christ is more and more clearly presented, in the influences of the home, in the services of the church, in the instruction of the Sunday school, in the pages of the Bible, in the voice of conscience, and in the experiences of the soul, the Christian is one who receives Christ as he is offered, in all his offices and perfections and powers. The Christian "comes" to Christ as to a divine Teacher and Guide, he "believes" on him and "trusts" him and "loves" him as his Saviour and Friend; he "follows" him and "obeys" him and "serves" him as his Master and Lord; he surrenders his very soul to him in absolute devotion; he worships and adores him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, as "very God of very God."

Such a yielding of self, and such a sincere acceptance of Christ, may be gradual; the

day or hour may or may not be fixed; but it begins a life so new, so distinct, so blessed, that a Christian is said to have been "born again," or "born anew," or "born from above," or "born of God." So Paul described the change as "regeneration," or a "new birth."

The New Birth

This new life is also called "eternal life"; not merely to denote its endlessness, but rather to suggest its quality and kind, as belonging to the eternal, as linked and related to God from which it springs. It is a present possession of the Christian. Its main features are goodness and trust and love. Its glory will abide forever. Its every need will be supplied by Christ.

"O Holy Saviour, Friend unseen,
Since on thine arm thou bid'st me lean,
Help me throughout life's varying scene,
By faith to cling to thee.

"Though faith and hope may long be tried,
I ask not, need not aught beside;
How safe, how calm, how satisfied,
The souls that cling to thee.

"Blest is my lot, whate'er befall;
What can disturb me, who appall,
While as my Strength, my Rock, my All,
Saviour, I cling to thee?"

Revised Hymnal, No. 551.

O Best of Friends: grant me grace to know thee better and to love thee more; guard me from evil, from doubt and from sin; lead me in right paths; help me to fight the good fight of faith; teach me the joy of service, and enable me ever to live for thee. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. Why did Christ come into the world? I Tim. 1:15, 16; John 3:16; 10:10.
2. Why was he called "Jesus"? Matt. 1:21.
3. What are some other names by which he was called? John 1:1, 18, 29, 34, 38, 41, 45, 49, 51; 20:28.
4. What must I do to be saved? Acts 16:31.
5. What does Christ require of his followers? Matt. 16:24.
6. What does Christ promise those who come to him? Matt. 11:28; John 4:13, 14; 6:35; 7:37.
7. What are some of the names by which those who accept Christ are called? Acts 11:26; Rom. 1:7; John 15:13, 15; 20:17; I John 3:1-3.

II

Confessing Jesus Christ

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Rom. 10:9, 10.

The Apostles' Creed

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate: was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church;† the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting, Amen."

---

*In Old English the word denotes "the place of departed spirits"; the phrase therefore means: Continued in the state of the dead and under the power of death until the third day.

†"Catholic" means universal; the phrase therefore refers not to the Church of Rome, but to the universal Church which includes all believers in Christ.

Confessing Jesus Christ

If we have accepted Christ, it is our duty and privilege to acknowledge openly our relation to him. The need is voiced by the words of our Master: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

The Necessity

This confession refers first and chiefly to our character and conduct. Our whole lives are to be such as continually to show that we belong to Christ, and are controlled by his Spirit. No matter what our lips may be saying, if our deeds are not good and helpful and generous, if we are not honest and pure and kindly in our dealings with others, we are "denying the Lord who bought us." The best confession of Christ is that of a consistent Christian life.

In Daily Life

However, there was another form of confession to which Christ was referring in the words we have just read. He was warning his disciples that they would meet with much persecution and

In Trial

opposition if they followed him, and he wished to encourage them to patient endurance, by assuring them of a divine and eternal reward if they continued faithful to him. As he predicted so it came to pass. The followers of Christ were imprisoned, scourged, tortured, killed; but they witnessed to the sustaining power of Christ by their patience under persecution and their courage in the face of death. These men were called martyrs or confessors. And such we are called to be. Our trials may be of a very different character; we may or may not be asked to endure bodily suffering or death; but we may meet with opposition or ridicule or unpopularity because we are following Christ. Loyalty to him may demand many sacrifices and involve hardships. Our confession will consist in the forbearance and patience and love we manifest. To strengthen us for such testimony Christ has given us the beatitude: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven."

There is a third way of confessing Christ. It is more formal, but closely related to the

other two. It consists in publicly taking our places as members of the Church and observing the sacraments which Christ gave to his followers. This form of confession is commonly called "uniting with the Church," and those who are received into membership are baptized as Christians and partake of the Lord's Supper. Those who, as members, were baptized in infancy, publicly assume the responsibility of communicants and make their acknowledgment of Christ by coming to the table of the Lord.

By Church Membership

The Need

But what is the need of such a public confession? Why is it not quite sufficient to trust and obey Christ in secret, and to live in his strength and to seek to serve him in private, to confess him by our lives, without recognizing any special relation to the Church?

1. Growth

First of all, because our own well-being demands it. The new life which springs from faith in Christ cannot be fully developed until this step is taken. Secret discipleship is never satisfactory. It strengthens one to feel that he is definitely committed to a certain course and cause. The association with other Christians is a

continual source of inspiration and an unfailing safeguard. The privilege of partaking in the sacrament of the "Lord's Supper" is a divinely ordained means of spiritual growth. For these and other reasons we owe it to ourselves that we publicly assume our places as members of the Christian Church.

2. Influence

Still more do we owe it to others that we definitely declare and acknowledge our relation to Christ. Our influence may be greater or less than we suppose; but whatever it may be, it should be definitely exerted toward leading others to accept Christ as their Lord. Instead of being helpful, one who secretly trusts in Christ is often a serious obstacle in the way of others. They regard his life, and admire his character, while ignorant of the secret sources of his power. Believing that such a person is not a Christian, they naturally conclude that one can lead the highest life without accepting Christ. On the other hand, no one ever frankly and honestly takes his stand as a professing Christian without in some measure inclining others to become followers of the Master.

Most of all we owe to our Lord this form of public confession in the church. He in-

tended his Church to continue through the centuries as the divine agency for making known in the world his saving power; but should all persons determine to be secret followers of Christ, the Church would soon cease to exist and the gospel would no longer be preached, and so far as a lost world is concerned, Christ would have died in vain. Yet what is the duty of one is the duty of all who have accepted Christ; it is to become members of his Church.

3. Loyalty in Christ

Christ also definitely declared that those who believed on him were to be baptized, and that his followers were to observe his Supper in remembrance of him. Our loyalty to him must make us obedient to these explicit commands.

Then, too, enrollment as church members is like enlisting under a great leader and accepting the uniform and honoring the flag. The "Captain of our salvation" can hardly be pleased with those who seem ashamed to be known as his followers.

"Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb;
And shall I fear to own his cause
Or blush to speak his name?"

Difficulties Of course there may be serious difficulties in our way. We should face them thoughtfully and prayerfully, and not hesitate to speak of them to our parents, or to our pastor, or other trusted friend.

1. Imperfection For instance, we may feel that we are not good enough to proclaim ourselves Christians. It may possibly help us if we remember that we are only confessing our own sinfulness and our need of a Saviour; that Christ requires of those who accept him and wish to become his followers, not perfection but sincerity; that the way to become better is by immediate obedience to every command of Christ; that the performance of this particular duty will place us in surroundings which cannot fail to help us do right; and that we shall never feel any better satisfied with ourselves, if we continue true to Christ; for it is the experience of his followers that they feel less and less worthy, the more they come to know the beauty and loveliness and grace of their Lord.

2. Ignorance Then, too, we may feel that we do not know enough of Christian doctrines and beliefs to profess our faith publicly. We may hear many things taught in church, and may read others in our Bibles,

which we do not understand, or possibly do not believe. It is true that many truths of religion are full of mystery and difficult to apprehend; but in our public confession we are not expressing our acceptance of creeds, but of Christ. We are claiming no knowledge, but are saying that we have taken him as our Teacher, that we have entered his school, that we expect to "learn of him"; that we believe in his promise to "those who come to him" that "they shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

3. Weakness

Or we may believe that we are not strong enough to maintain our stand as followers of Christ. We often feel our weakness most as we begin to strive against selfishness and sin; but that is because we never realize the strength of a stream until we begin to struggle against the current. Of course we do not wish to be as some others we may know, who have professed faith in Christ, but who are bringing contempt upon his sacred cause by their inconsistent lives. Their unfaithfulness has not made us love the Church less, nor yearn less eagerly for a Christian life; yet we do not want to make public our determination and then to fail. But we need not fail. He

who has given us the command will give us all needed strength, if we are willing to obey. The path of duty is the path of safety. Let us take the step our Master makes plain; let us thus show we believe his promises and trust his power, and let us leave the unseen future with him "who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

"Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee?
Ashamed of thee whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

"Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

"Till then—nor is my boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
And O may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me."

Blessed Saviour: So reveal thy love to me that I may be constrained to take up my cross daily and follow thee. Make me faithful unto death that I may receive at last the crown of life. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. Who were the first to follow Christ? John 1:35-51.

2. What did Christ promise to make of them? Matt. 4:18, 19.

3. What sacrifice was involved? Matt. 4:20, 22; 19:21, 22.

4. What recompense was promised? Matt. 19:27-29.

5. How may we deny Christ? Luke 22:54-62.

6. How soon should believers confess their faith? Acts 2:37-41; 8:26-38; 16:25-33.

7. What is meant by being crucified with Christ? Gal. 2:20; 6:14; Col. 3:1-4.

III

The Church

"Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone. . . In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit."

Eph. 2:19-22.

"*The universal Church consists of all those persons, together with their children, who make profession of the holy religion of Christ, and of submission to his laws.*"

Form of Government, Chap. II, Sec. II.

"*All children born within the pale of the visible Church are members of the Church, are to be baptized, are under the care of the Church, and subject to its government and discipline; and when they have arrived at years of discretion they are bound to perform all the duties of church members.*"

Book of Discipline, Chap. I, Sec. 5b.

"*A particular church consists of a number of professing Christians, together with their offspring, voluntarily associated together, for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Holy Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of government.*"

Form of Government, Chap. II, Sec. IV.

The Universal Church

All who profess faith in Christ and obedience to him are members of the Christian Church. It is this universal Church which the Apostles' Creed describes as "the holy Catholic Church." To this body, composed of all believers, has been given the duty of preaching the gospel to every creature, in order that the kingdom of God may be established in all the world, and "the whole earth filled with his glory."

In the New Testament are found certain names which have been given to the Church, which help us to understand its ideal character and relation to Christ. For example it is called "a building"; Jesus Christ is the "foundation," Christians are "living stones," the Spirit of God is the indwelling presence. Such a figure suggests the stability, the unity and the glory of the Church.

Its Names

This unity is further emphasized by the term "body." Jesus Christ is the head; and all who are united to him by faith are the members, under his direction and control, and receiving from him life and strength.

The Church is also called "the bride" of Christ. This beautiful figure suggests the great love which led him to "give himself for the Church," and her duty to be true and devoted to him, and further her hope of sharing his glory, when he "shall present her to himself" at "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Among other names it should also be remembered that Christ referred to the members of the Church as his "witnesses," who by the power of his Spirit should preach his gospel "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

As the Church is now organized it is divided into many branches, each one of which is composed of separate congregations or particular societies of Christians. The purpose of these particular churches is to secure the preaching of the gospel, the observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the spiritual growth of the members. While all have this end in view, there are many forms of church organization and government. The

The Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Church is named from its chief officers, who are called "presbyters" or "elders." These are divided into "teaching elders," who

are more commonly called "ministers" or "pastors," and "ruling elders," who, with the pastor, form in each separate church what is known as "the session."

The session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation. It has power to receive and dismiss members and to supervise their conduct. It has authority over the worship of the congregation, and over the uses to which the church buildings may be put. It has oversight of the Sunday school and other church organizations and societies, supervises the collection and distribution of benevolent offerings, appoints delegates to the higher governing bodies of the Church, and adopts the best methods for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation.

The other officers are the deacons and trustees. "Deacons are officers whose business it is to take care of the poor, and to distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use. To them also may properly be committed the temporal affairs of the church." In most churches, however, trustees are appointed by the congregation to hold the property and to control

the funds of the church as the congregation may direct.

The higher governing bodies of the church are the presbytery, which is composed of the ministers and one elder from each church within a certain district; the synod, composed of representatives of presbyteries within a still larger area; and the General Assembly, which also is composed of an equal number of ministers and elders, and represents all the presbyteries.

As the session has the power to receive and dismiss members, admission to membership in any particular church is always by vote of the session. Persons who have been members of other churches are received by presenting letters of dismission from those churches.

Admission of Members

Persons who were born within the pale of the church are members of the church, and, if baptized, are admitted to the Lord's Supper and enrolled as communicant members of the church, on appearing before the session and giving satisfactory evidence of their knowledge and piety. They are then, in most churches, publicly welcomed at the next communion service.

The same course is followed by all other

applicants for communicant membership, except that those not previously baptized receive that rite at the time of their public reception.

Some persons may stand in dread of this meeting with the session. It should therefore be explained that the experience is not difficult or embarrassing. One may be accompanied by relatives or friends. The session will be found to consist of a small group of Christian gentlemen who are always kindly sympathetic, and very frequently they are familiar acquaintances of the candidate. In an entirely informal conversation, brief questions are asked by the pastor which may be answered in a few words. These questions do not form an examination on the Bible or the doctrines of the Church, but relate to the acceptance of Christ. In most cases they will have been previously explained by the pastor in his class for intending communicants. There will be nothing in them to occasion surprise or discomfort. They are only intended to assist one in a sincere confession of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord, and in vowing faithfulness to him.

As our church law states: "The vote of the session is the essential and final act by

which one is thus received, and needs no subsequent action of the church to give it reality or validity." As a matter of custom, however, the session usually appoints a form of public confession and welcome for all who have been accepted as communicants of the church. "This is not to be regarded as part of either sacrament, nor as an invariable condition of admission to the Lord's Supper, but simply a method advisable in ordinary cases." (*Book of Common Worship*, p. 49.) This service is commonly held on Communion Sunday, usually immediately before the Lord's Supper is administered.

Public Confession

It is at this time that candidates who have not been baptized receive that ordinance. It is customary for all the members of the church to rise in recognition of these new members and to express their welcome to the church. All then resume their seats and together partake of the communion.

While reception into membership is conditioned solely upon a credible confession of faith in Christ, there are certain "standards" which fully set forth the teaching and government of the Presbyterian Church. To these only the

Church Standards

officers of the church are expected to subscribe, yet with them all the members of the church should become acquainted. Three of these standards are doctrinal, and three administrative; together they form the constitution of the church. They are as follows: "The Westminster Confession of Faith"; "The Larger Catechism" and "The Shorter Catechism"; "The Form of Government"; "The Book of Discipline"; "The Directory for Worship." All these are drawn from the Bible, and are held to be in full accord with its teachings, for in all matters of faith and practice the authority of the Bible is regarded as supreme.

While loyal to its own standards, the Presbyterian Church gladly recognizes all other Christian churches as one with it in the fellowship of the universal Church of Christ, and unites with them in the effort to preach the gospel in all the world and to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God.

"The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is his new creation
By water and the word;
From heaven he came and sought her
To be his holy bride,
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.

"Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth:
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued."

Revised Hymnal, No. 304.

O God, who hast made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and didst send thy blessed Son to preach peace to them that are far off and to them that are nigh; grant that all men everywhere may seek after thee and find thee. Bring the nations into thy fold, and add the heathen to thine inheritance. And we pray thee shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect and hasten thy kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. When was the Christian Church established? Acts, ch. 2.
2. What were the conditions of membership? Acts 2:38.
3. Who is the Head of the Church? Eph. 1:20-23.
4. In what does the unity of the Church consist? Eph. 4:4-6.
5. What is the supreme task of the Church? Matt. 28:19, 20.
6. What is the source of power for the Church? Acts 1:8.
7. What is the last Bible picture of the Church? Rev. 21:1 to 22:5.

IV

The Sacraments

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Matt. 28:19.

"For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come."

I Cor. 11:23-26.

"The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and The Lord's Supper."

The Shorter Catechism, 93.

"Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life; which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world."

Confession of Faith, Chap. XXVIII, Sec. I.

"The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

The Shorter Catechism, 96.

The Sacraments

Definition

"A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." In this way the Shorter Catechism defines a sacrament; and it further states that the two sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The word "sacrament" once meant an oath of fidelity taken by Roman soldiers on enlistment; then it came to denote any solemn promise that accepts obligation, then more particularly a religious service enjoined by Christ for the benefit of his followers. Hence, according to the first meaning of the word, these Christian sacraments are pledges of faithfulness to Christ, and of absolute loyalty to him.

Design

Then, similarly, they are designed to be signs of membership in the Christian Church. They are badges of religious fellowship. Those to whom they are administered are thereby marked as belonging to a certain organization, as soldiers are distinguished by

a peculiar uniform or are enlisted under a chosen flag.

But further, they are not empty forms, but are vivid and instructive symbols which set forth the great truths of the gospel. They are object lessons which are intended to teach the fundamental facts of the Christian faith.

Most important of all is the fact that they were given by Christ to be "means of grace" to believers. There is no magical virtue in these rites, nor does any peculiar power reside in the minister who conducts these services; but, by the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit, real and special benefits are received by those who partake of these sacraments in faith.

Permanence

Nor were these sacraments intended for only the first followers of Christ. They are meant to be observed through all the years until Christ returns in glory. That they were thus continuously to be observed is evident, from the plain commands of our Lord when he established them, from the fact that the needs they supply are continual, from the example of the apostles, and from the practice of the Church in all ages.

Baptism

In the sacrament of baptism, the application to the body of water is used to symbolize the cleansing of the soul by the blood of Christ, and the new life of holiness which results from faith in him.

It is the rite of initiation into the Christian Church. It is for this reason that it is administered to infants and young children whose parents are Christians. They are baptized to show that they are included in the Church with their parents. In presenting them for baptism, the parents renew their confession of faith in Christ; they dedicate their children to him, and express their belief that he alone can effect for their children that gracious work which the water of baptism suggests. They also promise to do all in their power to rear these children in Christian knowledge and faith. The church also obligates itself to train and nurture these children whose membership it has recognized in the rite of baptism.

When these children are old enough to understand what is involved, it is their duty to accept and confess the faith in which they were baptized, and publicly to confirm the vows that were made for them in baptism.

This is done before the church session, and it entitles them to full communion in the Church.

The Lord's Supper

The communion is not a private ceremony which only professing Christians are to attend. All persons should be invited to be present, that they may receive the impressive message which the service brings; but only communicant members of the Church are expected to partake of the bread and the wine which are the symbols used in this memorial supper.

The Names

The meaning of this service is suggested by the beautiful names it bears. It is called "The Sacrament" because of its more frequent observance. Here the believer is to renew his pledge of loyalty to Christ, and is to receive from Christ new supplies of grace.

It is called "The Lord's Supper" because it was established by him, on the night of his betrayal, at the last supper he ate with his disciples before his death. He wished it to be kept in special memory of himself, that he might in this service be called to mind by his followers. "This do," he said, "in remembrance of me." More particularly, it was

his death which they were thus to remember. He died for them. So Paul explained the supper when he said, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death." It is also his supper because, as his followers are then reminded, he is present, and ready to bless those who trust in him.

For this last reason it is also called "The Communion." This word means "to partake of something with others." As in this service we are reminded that Christ is really present, as our hearts go out toward him in love and devotion, he gives to us new life and strength and joy; yet all we receive from him we share with those who keep the supper with us. We also "commune" with Christ, in silent prayer; we tell him our needs and fears and hopes; and he gives us messages of peace and cheer. Others are also communing with him and we are reminded that all believers form one body, sharing the same faith and hope and love.

This service is also called "The Eucharist," from a word which means "to give thanks"; for on the night when Christ sat at the table with his disciples he gave thanks before he distributed the bread and wine. This service

should be for us not one of gloom, but of gladness, not of fear and awe, but of holy joy and thanksgiving. We should be glad as we remember what Christ has done for us, what he is doing, and what he will do when he comes again.

The Type

The meaning of this service becomes even more plain as we remember that when Christ established this sacrament he was keeping with his disciples a feast which was a type of the supper he bade them observe in his memory. That feast was called "the passover"; and what the passover was to the Jews, the Lord's Supper became to the followers of Christ. Each feast pointed back to a great deliverance in the past, and each pointed forward to a greater deliverance to come. The passover called to mind that night in which the angel of death went through the land but passed over the houses which were marked by the blood of a lamb; while on the same night those who had been saved by blood were saved by power, as God led them out of the land of bondage. So the Lord's Supper reminds us of a deliverance wrought by the blood of a Lamb, even Christ, our Paschal Lamb who was slain for us; of a deliverance,

too, wrought by power as we put our trust in him and receive the renewing strength of his Spirit.

As the passover also pointed forward to that greater deliverance which was wrought on Calvary by this Saviour, this Lamb of God, so, too, the Lord's Supper points us forward to that greater deliverance which will be wrought when Christ comes again, to raise the dead, to glorify the living, to begin his reign of glory; for "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come."

The Symbols

The symbols which are used in this service are easily understood. The bread reminds us that Christ, who is present, is the Bread of Life, and that as our bodies are strengthened by partaking of food, so our souls gain strength as we trust in Christ. This bread is broken because we are calling to mind the death of Christ whose body was broken for us. We remember the sharp thorns, the cruel scourge, the piercing nails, the cross, the spear, and recall the words: "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," and the explanation of the Master: "This is my body which is broken for you,"

and we are moved to new love and devotion to him.

So, too, wine pictures for us the blood of Christ, his very life; and the wine poured out pictures his life poured out, his blood which was shed for the ransom of many; and we remember that we "have been redeemed not with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ."

Thus when we drink the wine, as when we eat the bread, we picture our partaking of Christ, by which is meant our receiving him, in faith, as Saviour and Lord, the Source of our life and strength; and as we eat and drink with others we show that we have a common life and are members of one body, the Church of which Christ is head.

The sole condition of rightly observing the Lord's Supper is that identification with Christ, that submission and love and trust which are symbolized by partaking of the bread and wine. No other qualification is demanded. However conscious of fault and failure and sin, all who turn from sin and seek new strength from Christ are heartily welcome to the table of our Lord. Yet "The Shorter Catechism" wisely suggests: "It is required

The Participants

of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love and new obedience." To aid one in such preparation, a special preparatory service is held in most churches; but one should also seek, in private, some time for quiet thought, and should read prayerfully such portions of the Bible as set forth the death and resurrection of Christ and his boundless love to us.

During the Communion service the mind should be fixed prayerfully upon the great truths which are being presented. We should not think of ourselves, but rather of Christ, that there may be awakened in our hearts a new and passionate devotion to him "who loved us and gave himself for us."

When the service has ended, special care should be taken to keep in mind the presence and power of Christ, to avoid immediate and needless distractions, and to show by word and deed a new desire and strength to live for Christ and to walk with him.

"Jesus, thou Joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to thee again.

Coming to the Communion

"We taste thee, O thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon thee still;
We drink of thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from thee to fill.

"O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world thy holy light."
Revised Hymnal, No. 327.

O blessed Saviour, my Redeemer and my Lord, as I come to partake of the symbols of thy body which was broken for me and of thy blood which was shed for the remission of sins, create in me a mighty hunger for thee, the Bread of Life which came down from heaven, and instill into my weak soul new supplies of grace, new life, new love, new vigor, that I may not faint or falter but may ever be faithful to thee. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. Why was Jesus baptized? Matt. 3:13-17.
2. Why do we observe baptism? Matt. 28:19, 20.
3. What baptism does Jesus promise his disciples? Acts 1:4, 5.
4. How was the Lord's Supper established? Luke 22:7-13.
5. When was it observed by the early Church? Acts 2:41, 42, 46; 20:7.
6. What abuse in its observance arose in Corinth? I Cor. 11:20-26.
7. To what reunion does the Lord's Supper point forward? Rev. 19:6-9.

V

Christian Life

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing."

John 15:4, 5.

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

II Peter 3:18.

"The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the Word, Sacraments, and prayer, all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation."

The Shorter Catechism, 88.

"That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives."

The Shorter Catechism, 90.

"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

The Shorter Catechism, 99.

Christian Life

Accepting Jesus Christ marks the beginning of a new life, yet only its beginning. This life must be developed; its powers and virtues must be matured. "Forgetting those things which are behind," we should be "reaching forth unto those things which are before." We are bidden to "be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect." Such growth and progress may be gradual and difficult; yet they should be the object of our constant effort, and as we are coming to the communion there should be a special resolve to make more definite advance in our Christian living.

Conditions of Growth

As the life springs from faith in Christ, so its development will depend chiefly upon our constant trust in him. There are, however, certain definite habits and rules which we should not fail to observe, if we seek to grow into the likeness of Christ.

For instance, we should make it our habit, at all times and in all places, to remember that Christ is with us. This is often called

"the practice of his presence." We often may forget him, and we must be occupied by other thoughts, but one of the first and best rules of Christian living is the endeavor more and more continually to recall the fact that this loving Saviour and Friend is ever fulfilling for us his gracious promise: "Lo, I am with you alway."

The Presence of Christ

Then, too, our human friendships can aid us greatly in developing this new life. A Christian cannot be too much on his guard against forming intimate associations with those who do not love his Lord. Remember the word of Paul: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," and his other warning: "Evil companionships corrupt good morals." There is a beautiful phrase in the old prophecy: "Then they that loved the Lord spake often one to another." Let us choose our comrades from among those who are devoted and consistent followers of Christ. They will inspire us by their example, encourage us by their sympathy, and strengthen us by their faith. As even unconsciously we are molded by their influence, we will become more like our Lord.

Christian Friendships

Bible Study

We must have, as a constant companion and guide, the written Word of God, if we are to develop as Christians. Without it we shall remain weak and immature. So Peter suggests, "As newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." In reading the Bible we should not be discouraged if its contents seem hard to understand or lacking in interest. The taste for Bible study can be cultivated. Let us adopt a regular time and a definite plan. Possibly the worst time is just before we fall asleep at night, when we are tired and forgetful; but it is far better than having no time at all. The best time is the first hour of the day; and many young Christians have found a new and surprising interest in the Bible as they have begun to observe "the morning watch." For this "quiet time" with the Word of God, special selections are provided which prove helpful to many. Others prefer to follow the "Daily Readings" suggested in connection with the Sunday-school lessons. Others prefer to read the Bible "book by book," or to read one portion over and over again until it becomes more and more clear. Some like to read from another version than the English,

and find help in concentrating the mind by using the Greek or French or German. Some find much help in using a brief commentary or explanation of the passage read.

Whatever the plan, our purpose should ever be so to understand the truth which God has revealed, that we may know and do his holy will. We are to remember the rule: "Apply thyself to the Scriptures," but also: "Apply the Scriptures to thyself." Our Bible study must be in the truest sense "devotional." If we thus "search the Scriptures" we shall indeed find that in them we "have eternal life."

Among the "means of grace" those commonly emphasized, in connection with the Bible, are the sacraments and prayer. How helpful the former may be to the believer has already been suggested in referring to the Lord's Supper; but we need here to lay special stress upon the practice of prayer in relation to the growth and development of the Christian life. Prayer has been called "the Christian's vital breath"; and surely one can hardly be a true follower of Christ who does not believe in the power of prayer, who does not cultivate the practice of prayer, and who does not find an increas-

Prayer

ing delight in prayer. We must learn to pray. We should not be easily discouraged. Christ taught the first disciples, and he is willing to admit us to his school of prayer.

He encourages us by his example, for during his earthly ministry we so repeatedly find him praying, as to suggest this as a fixed habit of his life. He encourages us by his promises also. "Ask and ye shall receive," he is heard to say again and again. We should believe, then, that things will be granted by our Lord, when we pray, which would not be granted if we did not pray.

He suggests that we should have set times for prayer. While we can pray at all times, we will be aided by having appointed seasons, as at morning and at night, when we pause for praise and confession, and present to him our needs.

He teaches us to have a place for prayer, where we can be uninterrupted and alone. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret."

He states the necessity of definiteness in prayer, intimating that nothing is too small to be the subject of our prayer, but that

our first petition should be for the coming of the kingdom of God.

He declares that we should pray in faith, and with perseverance; but gives us the supreme lesson of submission to God in prayer, as he cries in his agony, when about to drink the bitter cup of death for us, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." As we learn from Christ such lessons in prayer, we shall be able more and more perfectly to obey the precept: "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

To grow into the likeness of Christ, by thus "abiding in him," by companionship with his followers, by studying his Word, by fellowship with him in prayer, should be our constant aim. We should never be satisfied with present attainments, but seek for continual development. This cannot be by fixing our thoughts anxiously upon ourselves, but by "looking unto Jesus." "Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
And make me love thee as I ought to love.

"Teach us to feel that thou art alway nigh,
Teach me the struggle of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer."

Revised Hymnal, No. 273.

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life: Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that, his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavor ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. What is the best proof that we are born of God? I John 2:29; 3:14; 5:1.
2. What should be our aim as Christians? Phil. 1:21; 3:13, 14; I Tim. 1:5; II Peter 1:5-7; II Tim. 4:7.
3. What care should Christians exercise as to their companionships? I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14 to 7:1.
4. What is the character and use of the Bible? Ps. 119:105; Heb. 1:1; II Peter 1:19-21; II Tim. 3:15-17.
5. What model for prayer has Christ given us? Matt. 6:9-15.
6. What encouragement in prayer has Christ given? Luke 6:12; 9:29; 11:1-13; 18:1-8.
7. What encouragement have we in seeking to become like Christ? Rom. 8:29, 30; I John 3:1-3; II Cor. 3:18.

VI

Christian Service

"Whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:44, 45.

"Who went about doing good."

Acts 10:38.

"Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8.

"We believe that it is our duty, as servants and friends of Christ, to do good unto all men, to maintain the public and private worship of God, to hallow the Lord's Day, to preserve the sanctity of the family, to uphold the just authority of the State, and so to live in all honesty, purity, and charity that our lives shall testify of Christ. We joyfully receive the word of Christ, bidding his people go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, and declare unto them that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and that he will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. We confidently trust that by his power and grace, all his enemies and ours shall be finally overcome, and the kingdoms of this world shall be made the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. In this faith we abide; in this service we labor; and in this hope we pray, Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith, Article XVI.

Christian Service

The Law of Life

The most natural expression of Christian life is found in the service which we render to others for the sake of Christ. Service is the law of Christian living. Our Lord calls us to labor in his vineyard. He teaches us to regard our abilities and wealth and friendships and influence and strength, as talents entrusted to us, for the use of which we are to render an account. He declares that in his own self-sacrificing devotion to others he has given us an example that we should imitate. He states that the greatest among his followers are those who are most helpful to their fellows. He bids us to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. He commands us to go into all the world and to bring to every creature the good news of his salvation. He would have us do all in our power to hasten the coming of the kingdom of God.

The Motive

The motive in this service must be love. Christ does promise to reward his servants, but he wishes them to be prompted by no selfish hope of

gain. He would have us moved by sympathy for those in need, by a desire to be helpful, by love for others for his sake, and most of all by gratitude to him who has done so much for us; as John wrote, "We love, because he first loved us," or as Paul declared, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, . . . that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

While the term "Christian Service" may describe everything which is done in the name of Christ, or in following his example, or in obedience to his will, there are certain duties which belong exclusively to those who have confessed their faith in Christ and are members of his Church. There are many other duties which Christians share in common with other men; these will be performed the more faithfully by the followers of Christ; and loyalty to the Master will lead his servants, in every sphere of life, to do, not only that which duty demands, but all that love suggests.

For instance, in every home it is the duty of husbands and wives to be faithful, of parents to provide for their children, and of

children to obey their parents; but in the Christian home, most of all, should be manifest a sense of the sacredness of family ties, and a spirit of devotion, of self-sacrifice and of love. Our Lord himself gave us a true example of home life, in those long years at Nazareth, living among his brothers and sisters in humble obedience to his earthly parents. During his public ministry he showed repeatedly his love for little children; and he gave his most tender lesson in service as he pointed to a little child and said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." So, too, when the apostles wrote their letters for our instruction they told us how to live in all the tender and holy relations of home life. Some persons appear at their best in public; but one who would render true Christian service should begin by showing how thoughtful and obedient and helpful and loving he can be in the home.

In the Home

Then, too, in the larger spheres of life, outside the home, the Christian, above all others, should be found most ready to serve. There is today a loud call for what is termed "social service," and to this call the Christian should be the

Social Service

first to respond. In the presence of poverty, pain, injustice, ignorance and crime, he should be the most eager to offer sympathy and aid.

It is true that most of the duties which these conditions suggest belong to the Christian not because of his special relation to Christ, but because he is a member of the community or a citizen of the State; but he will assume them the more gladly and accomplish them the more perfectly because he is a follower of the Master who taught us that, as the first commandment is to love God with all our hearts, the second is to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In every community, all wise movements which make for health and happiness, for peace and purity, for equality and enlightenment and liberty and progress, should be led and supported by Christians.

The civil government must enact laws to regulate wealth and poverty, to determine the relation between employer and employed, to control the hours and conditions and wages of the laborer, to abolish the evils of the liquor traffic, to preserve the Sabbath, to punish crime, and to relieve distress. The Christian should above all others aid and

support the government, should conscientiously obey the laws, should regard his own wealth and knowledge and power as sacred trusts to be used in the service of others, and in every relation of life should observe the "golden rule" of his Master: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them."

As we come to the communion we should resolve anew to be faithful in our performance of these varied forms of service; but we should also have in mind those duties which are not recognized by others, and are peculiar to us as members of the Church and as followers of Christ.

Duties of Church Members

In general we are expected to support and to strengthen the church, to maintain its peace and purity, to submit to its discipline, to observe its sacraments, to guard its good name, and in every way to seek its welfare.

More definitely it is our duty to attend the services of the church, both those appointed for Sunday and for the other days of the week. Unless providentially prevented, our attendance should be regular, cheerful, punctual. No other engagements should be allowed to interfere, and our personal plans

and habits should be made to conform to this fixed rule.

We will be profited by the instruction which the church provides, we will be aided in worship as we unite with others in praise and prayer, we will be helped in holy living by the inspiration of Christian fellowship and friendship. We will also encourage the pastor in his labors and influence our fellow members to be faithful in their attendance. Such a practice, moreover, is in accordance with the example of our Lord, with the practice of the people of God in all ages, and with the divine command: "Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together."

It is also our duty to contribute regularly to the financial support of the church and of its benevolent and missionary work. These contributions should be systematic. We should decide upon a certain portion of our income to be given weekly to religious and charitable work. One may begin with a tenth, but should increase the proportion whenever possible. Part of the amount contributed should be given to the local church of which one is a member, and part to the work of the church at home and abroad. In order that one may give more cheerfully and more

intelligently, an effort should be made to become acquainted with the different fields in which the church is interested, and with the various "church boards" and agencies by which the work is being carried on.

A further duty devolving upon every member is to take a definite part in the work of the church. Its activities are usually so varied and so well organized that it should not be difficult to find some place of service. The Sunday school is intended for adults as well as for children; it should include on its rolls all the members of the church, and it can find employment for all who fit themselves to be teachers or officers. The various societies, and brotherhoods and leagues, are ready to welcome all who are willing to unite with them, and can use the talents and direct the energies of old and young. There is some work for each one of us, and it is for us to discover where we can be of greatest help.

Above all it is our duty to bring others to Christ and into fellowship with his Church. He is "the Light of the World" and we are his witnesses. He would have us pray for laborers to be sent into his harvest; he would have us to bring all our tithes into his storehouse; he would have us go to all nations with

the message of salvation. It is for us faithfully to use every talent in the service of the Master and for the glory of his name.

"Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of thy tone;
As thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone.

"O use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as thou wilt, and when and where;
Until thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share."

Revised Hymnal, No. 361.

O Lord, give us more charity, more self-denial, more likeness to thee. Teach us to sacrifice our comforts to others, and our likings for the sake of doing good. Make us kindly in thought, gentle in word, generous in deed. Teach us that it is better to give than to receive; better to forget ourselves than to put ourselves forward; better to minister than to be ministered unto. And unto thee, the Lord of Love, be glory and praise forever. *Amen.*

Questions for Additional Study

1. What is the true influence of Christians? Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:14-16.
2. What are the characteristics and rewards of those who serve Christ? Matt. 5:3-12.
3. What instruction does Paul give as to the family life of Christians? Col. 3:18 to 4:1; Eph. 5:22 to 6:9.

4. What does the New Testament teach as to Christian citizenship? Rom. 13:1-8.

5. What should be our rules in giving money for Christian work? I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. chs. 8 and 9.

6. To what special kinds of service does Christ call his followers? Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8.

7. What vision encourages us in Christian service? Rev. 11:15.

YO-DPH-474